

## **Differentiated Lesson Observation Guidelines**

### **Why have Observers?**

One purpose of having many teachers observe a lesson is to gather as much information as possible about the impact of the lesson's design on student learning. More "eyes" on the students = more "data" about student learning.

### **What is my job as an Observer?**

Your primary task is to observe *how the students respond to the lesson and make some conclusions about how well the LESSON worked*. In other words, please note behaviors of the students and the benefits/difficulties of the lesson, NOT the behaviors of the teacher.

### **PROTOCOL FOR OBSERVING THE LESSON**

1. When you enter the room, please choose a student or group of students on whom to focus for the duration of the lesson. Remember that you are studying the impact of the lesson on student learning, *not* the performance of the teacher.
2. Use the draft of the **Lesson Plan** to guide your "study". Note the Evaluation questions posed by the Planning Team.
3. As an Observer, **please do not interfere with the natural process of the lesson** (e.g., by helping, directing, or teaching students). Also, please avoid talking with other Observers during the lesson.
4. There may be time for you to briefly interview a student at the end of the lesson. If time is allotted, you will have 2-3 minutes to ask a student the questions on the **Student Interview Protocol** (next page). Refrain from using the interviews to "teach" students.

## **Student Interview Protocol**

When the Teacher concludes the lesson, you may be given time to interview a student. Use the following questions:

- [Greet the student. Introduce yourself and ask for his/her name.]
- What did you especially like about the lesson?
- What did you learn in this lesson?
- What do you hope to learn or do tomorrow?

Feel free to use your own language and style to rephrase these questions, but please refrain from using the interviews to “teach” students. Record the student’s responses below.

**INTERVIEWER’S NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT’S NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**This student said he/she especially liked....**

**This student said he/she learned....**

**This student said that tomorrow in this subject, he/she hopes to...**

**Other notable things this student said:**

## **DIFFERENTIATED LESSON DISCUSSION PROTOCOL**

All participants, note:

- The first time you speak in the discussion, begin by thanking the Demonstration Teacher for teaching the lesson. You only need to thank the Demonstration Teacher the first time that you speak to him/her.
1. The Facilitator begins the discussion by briefly outlining the agenda for the discussion.
  2. The Demonstration Teacher comments on his/her reactions to the lesson, including:
    - What worked
    - What did not work
    - What he/she might change about the lesson
  3. Any teachers who assisted with planning the lesson respond next, in turn. Each Planning Teacher begins his/her comments by thanking the Demonstration Teacher.
    - What worked
    - What did not work
    - What he/she might change about the lesson
  4. The Differentiation Specialist shares his/her comments about the lesson.
  4. The Demonstration Teacher responds to any points or questions that the Planning Teachers or Differentiation Specialist raised.
  5. The Facilitator prompts Observers when to begin giving feedback that is related to the focal points/goals/issues of the lesson. (See the Guidelines for Effective Feedback, next page.)
  6. **Important!** When an Observer raises an issue or point, the Facilitator takes all comments and questions related to that point. For example, if an Observer poses a question about why the team decided to group students in a certain way, the Facilitator will solicit related questions or comments before the Demonstration and Planning Teachers respond. This waiting etiquette prevents the discussion from becoming a point-volleying session, and allows all participants to voice feedback in a reflective manner.
  7. When 10 minutes remain, the Facilitator prompts Observers to share the Student Interview responses. All Observers who interviewed a student give the Demonstration Teacher a copy of their interviewee's responses.

**Guidelines for Giving Effective Feedback  
(Based on Brookhart, 2008):**

**Be specific.** Generic or vague comments are not useful for promoting growth.

NO: "I thought this was a good lesson."

YES: "I was impressed by how focused the learning goals of this lesson are. This impacted student learning in several ways..."

**Be relevant to the goals and content of the lesson.**

NO: "I noticed some neat posters in your room. Where did you get those?"

YES: "It's obvious that this lesson worked well in part because of the strong sense of classroom community. This was most evident in the lesson when...."

**Be positive.**

NO: "If I were you, I wouldn't have done it that way."

YES: "I liked when \_\_\_\_\_. How do you think \_\_\_\_\_ would have worked?"

*Possible discussion topics*

- What went especially well
- What insights the lesson gave you as an observer (e.g., about differentiation, about your own practice, about how students learn)
- How/why students were grouped
- How students responded to the lesson
- The nature or focus of the tasks students were completing
- The goals of the lesson
- How/whether assessment was used
- The content/focus of the previous lesson
- Possibilities for the next lesson

*Possible sentence/question starters:*

- "I was encouraged/inspired by..."
- "I was surprised when..."
- "I noticed that..."
- "I thought that \_\_\_\_\_ was a example of good teaching because..."
- "[Demonstration Teacher's name], can you explain what was going on in your mind when..."
- "When I taught a similar lesson..."
- "I observed a student(s) doing \_\_\_\_\_, which made me wonder/realize..."
- "I see \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lesson Plan, but I observed this \_\_\_\_\_ in the actual lesson. [Demonstration Teacher's name], can you talk about the difference?"